



WAKE UP!

President/ Editor
Dave Barbuzzi

Publisher
Chris Bruno

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Acton , Amesbury , Andover , Bedford , Beverly, Billerica , Burlington , Chelmsford , Concord , Danvers, Dracut , Gloucester, Haverhill, Holliston, Ipswich, Lowell, Lynnfield, Manchester, Marblehead, Maynard, Merrimac, Newburyport, North Chelmsford, North Reading , Peabody, Reading, Rockport, Salem , South Hamilton, Sudbury , Tewksbury , Topsfield, Wakefield , Wayland , Wilmington , Winchester



Ronnie and Phyllis. Ron Noviello is calling it a career after over 50 years of service to the members of the NALC. Ron was successful in helping countless numbers of letter carriers (and some clerks) to obtain approval of their worker's comp claims and to receive scheduled awards.

President's Message

"Mt. Rushmore"

It's not often that the same person graces both the front AND back cover of the Wake-Up! However, Ron Noviello's career of service to the NALC, Branch 25 and beyond, warrants the honor. Ronnie has decided that for personal health reasons it's time to call it a career.

Ronnie was an officer of Branch 25 longer than I've been a letter carrier, and that's 34 years for me. He was the Union's version of a "consigliere" to Randy Keller for many, many years. If you went to a National Convention, you would see him sitting next to Dave Ferris, his partner in crime.

Ronnie carried mail in Reading, MA, where he never backed down from a confrontation with any number of Postmasters and Supervisors over the years. He participated in the strike of 1970 that was instrumental in securing a better future for all carriers that have carried mail since. The carriers of his generation elevated letter carriers from collective begging to collective bargaining.

Ronnie accompanied countless letter carriers to Boston to assist them with their workers' compensation claims. In his day, it was not unusual for him to barge into the JFK building and insist upon being seen. Sometimes, he may have had a box of chocolates, sometimes just his brash personality. Either way, he got the job done. Many members had lunch with Ronnie at Jeveli's in East Boston after their meetings.

Although Ron has not been able to return to work since the onset of the pandemic, his retirement will still leave a void in the branch that won't be easy to fill. I speak for all members of the Executive Council in wishing Ronnie the best. Here's to a long, healthy retirement! Salud!

With Ron's retirement effective September 4, I have appointed retired Burlington letter carrier Mark Gangi to serve as trustee. Mark served as Secretary of Branch 25 for many years before retiring and moving to Florida. Well, heeeyee's baaaaaack!

Next month, there will be steward elections throughout the branch as required by the by-laws. If you are willing to be part of the election committee in your office, please contact the branch office or email me at djbbr25@gmail.com. There is not much to it, simply posting a sign-up sheet for those that want to run for steward and then distribute and collect ballots from members. I will have all the necessary material available on the branch website, or for those that aren't computer savvy I will get the materials to you at your office.

Last month, there was a fact sheet about OWCP and Covid-19 claims. I can't emphasize enough how important it is to file a CA-1 if you have had Covid-19. Even if you have fully recovered, and you have no symptoms, we never know what the future brings and there could be future effects from Covid-19.

The summer is winding down and hopefully so too are overtime violations. I recently participated in a labor management meeting in one office and a grievance meeting in another where the violations were rampant. In both instances, management raised similar concerns. Primarily, they said they didn't feel right sending odl carriers back out to the street after they had already completed their assignment, and provided assistance on another assignment.

I understand their concern and I understand the frustration of letter carriers that are sent back out to deliver. I also understand the contract. The contract is clear. Non-odl carriers should not be utilized for overtime when there are odl carriers available at the regular overtime rate. Further, non-odl carriers MUST NOT be used off their assignment for overtime unless all odl carriers have been maximized to twelve hours. Granted, there could be legitimate circumstances that could require the use of non-odl carriers before odl carriers work 12 hours. A manager "not feeling comfortable" asking an odl carrier to go back out to deliver is NOT a legitimate circumstance.

If you are on the overtime desired list, and it has become too much for you to work 12 hours, you can get off the list. That may sound harsh, it is not intended to. The point is, you have made a choice and management must respect that choice. Your choice, according to the contract, is that you want to work 12 hours before someone off the list can work 12 minutes off their assignment. You may not really want to work that many hours, but that is what you are saying you want to do when you sign the list. Likewise, management has to respect the contractual rights of those that don't sign the overtime list. Management has to ensure that the odl is properly "maxed out" before requiring them to work overtime. You may find that your manager may ask you in the morning how much work they have to give you in order for you to work 12 hours. Your manager may also let you know that if you return to work you are expected to continue working for up to 12 hours. It is up to each local steward to make sure that the rights of both non-odl carriers and odl carriers are protected.

Finally, I hope everyone is taking precautions to protect themselves and their family, friends, and co-workers from the breakthrough strain of Covid. More and more people are being vaccinated with the full approval of the Pfizer vaccine. Stay safe.

Stay informed!

Dave Barbuzzi

Executive Vice-President's Report

As you will see in another spot in this issue of the Wakeup, our OWCP Rep and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Branch 25, Ron Noviello, will be stepping down from his positions in the branch as of September 4. Ron has been guiding the carriers in Branch 25 through the painful and lengthy OWCP process for as long as I have worked in the Postal Service, over 33 years, and well before that. Many carriers have had their claims approved, that otherwise may not have, with his help. He also served as a trustee and the Chairman of that Board for many years, helping to make sure the finances of the branch are in good shape. One thing I learned from Ron, was that the Union has a much better chance of helping our members with their claims when they contact us as early as possible, after they get injured on the job. Although Ron has been retired from the Postal Service for many years, I wish him good luck in the next phase of his retirement.

As this is being printed, Covid-19 infections are picking up, not as bad in Massachusetts as in other parts of the country, but still spreading at an alarming rate. This new variant has been infecting younger people more than the first variant, that had been so debilitating to the population over 65 years of age. With the full authorization of the Pfizer vaccine, I expect some of the unvaccinated to get their vaccines, but until the infection numbers are greatly reduced, we are going to see a return of the requirement of wearing masks when indoors in public. The requirement has already started in varied communities for businesses and schools, and more are probably coming soon. I would not be surprised to see the Postal Service go back to requiring masks inside the office when social distancing is not possible. Remember, if this happens it is for health reasons and is most likely temporary. This pandemic is not over, and I hate to keep repeating myself, but we can't let our guard down until it is.

We have had a lot of CCA conversions to regular this year and it is expected that many more CCAs will be converted as more CCAs are hired. The Postal Service has a 10 year plan, and part of it is to hire thousands of employees before the end of this year, hopefully they are successful. Some of our stations are severely understaffed. After being converted you have 60 days to choose a health plan. Any career employee should make sure they take care of this within the proper time frame, but if you missed the deadline, there will be a chance to choose or change your plan from any of the FEHB plans when open season for health benefits comes around this Fall. For any carriers planning to retire within the next 5-6 years, remember you need to carry a FEHB health plan for the last 5 years of your career, in order to carry it into retirement. I have seen carriers extending their careers, against their wishes, in order to satisfy this requirement. Any questions about this, call the Union office.

We are about to have our second in person branch meeting in September since March of 2020, the June meeting was well attended and hopefully many carriers can attend this one. I know it is the day after Labor Day but if you get out of work in time to make the meeting that would be great. Food will be served at 7pm and the meeting starts at 8. The back pay from our last contract negotiations should have been received by all by now. There were a few minor glitches where a handful of carrier's payments were delayed, but figuring back pay for every city letter carrier in the country is a big project. There will be the largest COLA of my career coming in September and another contract raise coming in November. This all will not only increase the salaries of every city carrier, but increase the contributions toward our retirements, TSP and annuities. Hope to see you at the next meeting.

Keep your head up!

Paul Desmond

Calendar of Events

September 2	VJ Day, WWII
September 4	International Bacon Day
September 6	Labor Day
September 7	Regular Monthly Meeting K of C Wilmington 8:00PM Food served at 7:00Pm
September 8	International Literacy Day
September 11	911 Remembrance
September 12	Grandparents Day
September 17	Constitution Day
September 19	Wife Appreciation Day
September 22	Autumn Equinox

David J. Barbuzzi	President
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Ron Noviello	Workers' Comp Rep.

Your "Wake-Up!" is produced in-house at the Branch 25 Union office each and every month.

Chairman, Branch 25 Trustees

To the Members of Branch 25,

I, Ronald Noviello will not be running for Branch 25 Trustee, or position of OWCP Representative due to health reasons. I am officially giving my notice of retirement as of September 4, 2021 for this position.

I hope during my 52 Union career years that I have helped members of Branch 25 resolve their OWCP problems. It has been a fulfillment and pleasure to help my union members.

Sincerely,

Ronald Noviello

Telehealth (noun) healthcare facilitated by telecommunications technology. It's important to note that the operative word in the definition is facilitated, that is, to assist or make easier. Telehealth is by no means an end all and be all in itself. Obviously, there are times when a personal visit to a health care professional is essential. There are other times, however, when telehealth can be an extremely useful tool (COVID-19 concerns, or your doctor is not available). You can visit with a board certified doctor in minutes, 24/7, on your smart phone, tablet or computer. Telehealth visits are covered by the NALC Health Benefit Plan.

Using the visits you can:

- Get care for common health problems like the flu, fever and more.
- Feel better faster. Doctors can assess your condition, provide a treatment plan and, if appropriate, send a prescription to the pharmacy of your choice.

Note 1: You'll pay just a \$10 copay through our plan.

Note 2: According to recent survey data from American Well, almost 90% of people who have used telehealth are satisfied and would use it again.

For computer savvy plan members you can download the mobile app at www.nalchbptelehealth.org or call 888-541-7706 to access this service.

A couple of quick afterthoughts:

COVID-19 is still with us.

Shedding winter clothing means more skin exposed to UVA and UVB rays. Take the necessary precautions. Sunscreen is helpful but not foolproof. Dermatologists recommend SPF lotion of 30 or higher, although higher than 30 is of dubious value.

Keep on truckin'

Rich Donlon

“Covid Guidelines Updated”

In the words of Yogi Berra, it feels like déjà vu all over again. With COVID-19 infections rising again throughout the country, due to the spread of the Delta variant strain, the CDC (Center for Disease Control) issued new guidelines in July. On August 13, 2021, the US Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) followed suit, updating its COVID-19 workplace safety recommendations to align with the CDC guidance.


OSHA now encourages employers to help workers get vaccinated, continue to instruct those who test positive to stay home from work, enforce physical distancing, and provide masks to workers. Although infection rates among fully vaccinated persons remains low, and serious illness or death among fully vaccinated persons is very rare, OSHA co-signed the CDC’s recommendation that even fully vaccinated workers should wear masks in indoor settings to slow the spread of the virus to others who may not be fully vaccinated and to those who are at risk of more serious complications from infection.

OSHA also suggests that employers consider adopting policies that require workers to get vaccinated or to undergo regular COVID-19 testing – in addition to mask-wearing and physical distancing – if they remain unvaccinated.

Stay Safe,
Jim Salvati

Lyrics Trivia

Well, it's no big sin to stick your two cents in
If you know when to leave it alone
But you went over the line
You couldn't see it was time to go home

 **BRANCH 25 RETIREE GRATUITY VOUCHER**


Name: _____
(as it will appear on plaque)

P.O. Retiring from: _____

Phone number: _____

Retirement date: _____

Please note: Retiree must be a member in good standing at date of retirement. Retiree has 4 months from retirement date to remit this voucher to the branch office. Please mail to: NALC Branch 25
2500 Main St, Suite 201, Tewksbury Ma, 01876



“Can I Have my Allowance?”

Ahhhhh, the good ole days. Taking out the trash, mowing the lawn, doing the dishes.... I hope it earned you more than it did me. But what I’m talking about is our uniform allowance, which is covered under Article 26 of the National Agreement. Living in New England means we have to protect ourselves during all four seasons, and we should look professional doing it. If you’re a CCA you become eligible for a uniform allowance after completing 90 work days or 120 calendar days of employment. When a CCA becomes eligible for a uniform allowance, funds are approved through local management. After approval, a Letter of Authorization form must be completed and provided to the employee within 14 days of the eligibility date. This date will become your uniform anniversary date and it does *NOT* change when you are converted to career status. The only exception to this rule is if you are a CCA who is separated for lack of work and then rehired after your anniversary date has passed. If you do not use your uniform allowance before the next anniversary date any remaining balance is forfeited. CCAs cannot purchase uniform items during their five day calendar break between appointments, but retain any remaining amount of allowance into their next appointment. Upon conversion to career CCAs also keep any unused allowance until the following anniversary date.

If you’re looking for USPS licensed uniform vendors you can find them on your Liteblue page under My HR, which has a link to the Uniform Program. Under the terms of the 2019-2023 Agreement and as of 5/21/21 carriers are entitled to \$487 per annum which is effective on the employee’s anniversary date. When a CCA is converted to career status they are entitled to an additional credit upon their first anniversary date after conversion. The current credit is \$113. When you go to spend your first uniform allowance ask your fellow letter carriers or your on-the-job instructor for some advice. Some of the senior carriers might even offer to give you an extra piece of gear.

In solidarity,
-Tony Bossi

Vice President's Report

It has been a tough summer to be a letter carrier, as far as the weather goes. It seems like hot and humid, and rain are the only two options. Hopefully those members who took a summer vacation enjoyed, at least some, good weather. It seems like the back pay that many carriers have eagerly anticipated will have hit everyone's account by the time this issue of the *Wake Up* hits your mailbox. The latest Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) was also just announced in early August. This latest COLA will give letter carriers a roughly 55 to 93 cent per hour increase depending on what pay step each carrier is at. The COLA is a great benefit of our National Agreement that some carriers may not fully understand. A cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) is an increase in wages to counteract the effects of inflation. Cost-of-living adjustments are typically equal to the percentage increase in the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W) for a specific period. The most recent COLA was the fourth out of seven to be received during the 2019-2023 National Agreement. The remaining three will come in March 2022, September 2022, and March 2023. Many other unions have lost such adjustments, but this is a benefit that the NALC has always fought to keep as part of our contract.

There has been a big push in my office lately about scanning. I'm not sure if this is the case in other offices as well, but I'm guessing it probably is. It's been my experience that most of the time we receive vigorous messaging about something it's probably coming from the district level or higher. Scanning properly, whether delivery scans on parcels, Hot Case, or leave/return office scans or even the sampling requests is part of our job. In my office management has been going around with a list of sampling requests that didn't happen and questioning carriers as to why there were no scans made. I had one come up for a delivery that was a hold, so I entered it as the address not on route for delivery today option and was questioned the next day about it. As annoying as they can be, do not just ignore them on purpose. If there is mail to scan, please scan it. We have been instructed that if a carrier misses their Hot Case scan in the AM, they will be called back from the route to the office to make that scan. Silly? Maybe, but they are paying us to do it.

We get paid to do it so take the time to do it. The other issue that has come up many times before is falsifying scans. Management is obsessed with clearing all the scans. I honestly don't think they even really care about the actual delivery or customer service much of the time. We are supposed to be scanning the parcels correctly and at the correct location.

It's kind of funny how management will question a carrier about where a parcel was scanned but will then turn around and tell carriers to scan parcels as "no access" or "attempted" in the office at the end of the day when no attempt was ever made.

Why? Because it clears that parcel off the list and makes their bosses happy, but it's not right. If you are instructed to make these scans do as instructed but please let your steward or the branch office know about it. Back when barcodes and tracking were new management actually instructed us to scan them all as delivered in the office so we wouldn't miss them. No one cared. Very few customers were looking them up online to see where they were or when they were coming. In 2021, we all know that's not the case anymore. Everyone knows what is coming, where it is and when it should be there.

Lastly, I would like to congratulate Jeremy Boucher from the Holliston office. Jeremy was nominated by a fellow letter carrier and selected for the FY2021 Engagement Most Valuable Player award. Jeremy is a T-6 who has been in Holliston for 5 years. Congrats Brother!

In Solidarity,

Dan Wheeler



I would like to congratulate Jeremy Boucher from the Holliston office. Jeremy was nominated by a fellow letter carrier and selected for the FY2021 Engagement Most Valuable Player Award. Jeremy is a T-6 who has been in Holliston for 5 years. Congrats Brother! - Dan Wheeler



Preparing Kids for The New School Year During COVID-19

As kids, parents, teachers and schools approach the start of a new school year, questions remain about exactly what in-person learning may look like. The following answers may help students prepare.

How can parents help kids deal with uncertainty?

Be flexible. Help kids understand that while there might be a plan for going back to school, it may change — and that's okay. Use the opportunity to show your child how to be flexible in order to cope with uncertainty.

Practice acceptance. Being able to accept situations as they are allows people to also accept the emotions that come with those situations, and then to cope with them

Focus on what you can control. While it's hard to tell your kids that you don't know what will happen, it's good to be realistic with them. Help them focus on things they can control, such as how to wear a mask correctly and proper handwashing, rather than the list of things they can't possibly know or control.

How can parents help prepare kids for going back to a classroom?

Figure out your school's plan. Kids feel reassured when they know what plans are in place and what changes to expect. Every school district is making their own plans for how to open safely, so find out what the plan is for your school and then talk with your kids about what might be different. What will the classroom look like? What will lunch and recess be like? What extracurricular activities or clubs will your child have or not have? How will they access extra supports, like tutoring or counseling? Walking through the specifics can give your kids something concrete to hold onto.

Practice different scenarios ahead of time. Give kids a sense a control by talking through different scenarios. Discuss their questions and concerns. Let them know they can play an active role in the safety and well-being of everyone at school. That gives them something tangible they can do in a time of so much uncertainty.

How can parents help kids cope with the stress of going back to school?

Help them think about the positives of going back, especially if they're feeling anxious. Remind them they can look forward to seeing their teachers and friends again and getting to do activities together. That can be comforting to kids amidst the uncertainty. Focusing on the positive of whatever reality we're living in is a powerful way to cope with stress

Try to be flexible and forgiving with both your child and yourself. This year is going to be challenging for everyone. Don't hesitate to reach out if you or your child is struggling. The EAP is here to assist your family. To learn more, give us a call or visit EAP4YOU.com

WAKE UP

2500 Main Street
Suite # 201
Tewksbury, MA 01876
Phone: (978) 658-5820
Fax: (978) 658-0888
Web: www.nalcbranch25.com

First Class Mail
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
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TEWKSBURY, MA



at the next meeting
September 7
K of C Wilmington
8:00 PM



NALC Branch 25 long-standing Chairman of the Board of Trustees and OWCP Representative Ron Noviello pictured here with the late Dave Ferris. Ron and Dave were often joined at the hip.